

Chandler in Dallas

TURNAROUND JACK (Morrow, \$18.95), the second well-crafted Jack Kyle mystery by former Dallas policeman Richard Abshire, is so self-contentedly Raymond Chandleresque in its style

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Ricky Whit's former ghost writer

and outlook that Abshire even refers to Philip Marlowe in his opening line when, like Marlowe, in *The Big Sleep*, Jack Kyle is "sober and doesn't care who knows it" as he "calls on a million dollars." In Kyle's case it's a Cypriot businessman in Dallas named Guy Borodin who wants his wayward wife followed and a photographic record made of her love affairs. Kyle obliges and, like Marlowe, eventually is used by his client for even meaner purposes. Kyle finds himself embroiled in a scheme by a foreign owner to make off with a computer chip so advanced it can practically fly an airplane all by itself. The U.S. Customs Service gets involved in sifting through the mare's nest of greed and loyalties-for-sale, but it's ex-cop Kyle who is equipped with the mix of intuition and a street cop's patient methodology that pays off in the end.

Abshire's intricate plot is fun to follow, but the real attraction in *Turnaround Jack* is Abshire's detective, who is entertainingly cranky, like Marlowe, without being downright misanthropic. "Computers and I," he says, "did not get along at all, my only experience with them being limited to surreal spats with one or another utility company over their allegations that I had made too many calls to Bombay or might have flushed my toilet a million times a day for a month." One conspicuous departure from the Marlowe-like worldview is Abshire's picture of the Dallas Police Department as an impeccable institution. This is out of character for crotchety social critic Kyle and not a credible depiction for anybody who has seen "The Thin Blue Line."